

MAGONIA



74



IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TONIGHT

JOHN HARNEY WONDERS WHAT REALLY HAPPENED WHEN
TRAVIS WALTON WENT DOWN TO THE WOODS IN 1975
... AND GARETH MEDWAY IS STILL ON THAT FENCE!



MAGONIA 74
(incorporating MUFOB 121)

APRIL 2001

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SUBSCRIPTION DETAILS
Magonia is available by exchange with other magazines, or by subscription at the following rates for four issues:

UK	£5.00
Europe	£6.00
	10.00 euros
USA	\$13.00
Elsewhere	£7.00

US subscribers must pay in dollar bills. We are unable to accept checks drawn on American banks.

We accept French banknotes at the rate of FF10 to £1.00

Cheques and money orders must be made payable to JOHN RIMMER, not 'Magonia'.

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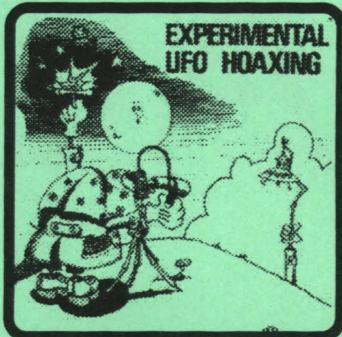
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EDITORIAL NOTES

TWENTY FIVE YEARS AGO



Cover design from Magonia New Series 2

Our regular 25 years ago feature gets promoted to page two in this issue of Magonia. For the March 1976 issue, besides being the first 'properly printed' all-litho issue, contained the controversial article *Experimental UFO Hoaxing*, by David Simpson. This outlined the creating of a hoax UFO experience and photographs on the notorious Cradle Hill in Warminster, just six years earlier. The hoax was a comparatively simple one, and a full account of how it was done can be found on the Magonia website: (www.magonia.demon.co.uk/arc/70/hoax.html).

The hoax was successful, the report being written up and analysed at great length in *Flying Saucer Review* and elsewhere, with the great and the good of ufology bringing their combined intellect to bear on analysing the photographs. Curiously, despite heavy hints from David Simpson - in his *alter ego* as a member of SIUFOP (Society for the Investigation of Unidentified Flying Objects) a Surrey-based group that could be regarded as the founding father of sceptical ufology in Britain, none of these luminaries noticed any of the elementary errors that had been seeded into the photographs to provide a key to the hoax.

My favourite comments are from the French ufologist Pierre Guérin - Director of Research at the French National Centre for Scientific Research - who pontificated: "In my opinion there is no question of the object photographed being in any way the result of faking..." and announcing that the photographic image represented "a solid object not visible to the human eye, but emitting ultraviolet light".

Other 'researchers' constructed elaborate triangulations to determine the position of the UFO image - they all got it wrong, even though their failure was itself a clue to the falsity of the photographs. In the end the hoax was exposed through a chance series of events, which led to Charles Bowen, editor of

the then-respectable FSR publishing an editorial titles 'Dubious Photographs'. After the expose in *Magonia* he wrote a splendidly fulminating editorial, 'Cheats', which we still treasure.

The hoax proved a number of important points: the ease with which 'perfect' photographs can be created (remember, this was well before computer programs such as Photoshop) and the slackness of much UFO 'investigation'. In a significant comment in his Conclusions, Simpson says: "[The investigators'] statements and actions were often not those of people trying to understand a strange event, but those of people prepared to ignore relevant criticisms in order to support a cause".

Pointing out that FSR was only involved in the investigation through an accident of circumstances when the hoax was perpetrated, and that Charles Bowen and the other people involved in investigating the case were considered at the time to be serious researchers, "it is therefore unfortunate that when presented with a UFO case of such potential importance, so little was achieved. The sighting took place in England, the photographer lived near London, and his negatives yielded what many considered to be the most convincing picture of a UFO ever taken".

Of course, that was then, and this is now. Investigation standards have improved, haven't they? No-one would be fooled by such a simple hoax today, surely? Well there's only one way to find out, and that is to conduct a similar experiment to assess current investigation standards. But that would be immoral, wouldn't it?

The next issue of *Magonia* is going to be a Hoax Special, and we would like to discuss the value, if any, of such hoax-experiments. Are they a valid form of research? If you have views on this, or especially if you have information on a hoax, and you feel the time is ripe to reveal it, please get in touch.

THE CASE FOR FENCE SITTING PART 2

GARETH J. MEDWAY

Over the past half a century there have been hundreds of books, to say nothing of articles, purporting to solve "The UFO question". The answers vary (and conflict, of course), but they are usually alike in that they consist of something that could easily be summarised in a few words, whether "They come from Zeta Reticuli", or "Weather balloons". The bulk of this writing is polemical, the author wanting to convince the reader of a particular theory, and selecting and arranging the material accordingly. So far as one can tell, it almost never succeeds. Instead, for the most part, it is read by people who already share the author's opinion, and want to be confirmed in their views; and this is as true of what appears in Magonia as what appears in UFO Magazine.

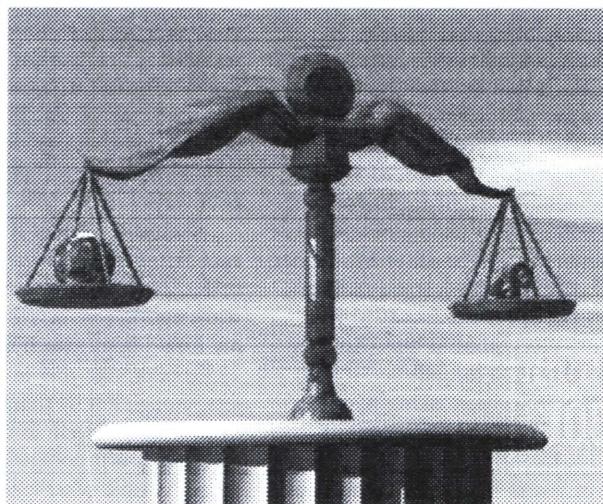
THE PRIMARY reason for this is that proving a theory about UFOs usually amounts to having to prove a negative, which is of course impossible. A sceptic cannot prove

that there are no ETs. Less obvious, but no less true, is that an ETH proponent is at root trying to demonstrate that "There is no other explanation for these reports", which is equally impossible.

The history of the psychosocial hypothesis indicates, I think, another reason. The PSH is usually said to derive from two works. Jacques Vallee's *Passport to Magonia*, and John Keel's *Operation Trojan Horse*, though neither book was itself advocating it. Vallee compared flying saucer reports to the medieval belief in flying ships from the mysterious land of Magonia. Mothman to Spring-heeled Jack, and Antonio Villas-Boas's claim to have had sex with an attractive spacewoman to the old theological belief in intercourse with demons. He did not attempt to draw a straight conclu-

sion from all this - "The problem cannot be solved today" (1) - nor has he in subsequent books.

Keel's book, which unlike Vallee's was based on a large amount of first-hand research, decided that UFOs "are merely temporary intrusions into our reality or space-time continuum, momentary manipulations of electro-magnetic energy... This may seem like a fantastic concept, but . . . all of the evidence supports our fantastic concepts more readily than it supports the notion that we are receiving visitors from Mars or Aenstria." (2) In this and subsequent books he noted the same kind of similarities to other unexplained phenomena as pointed out by Vallee, and concluded that they all ultimately had the same obscure "ultraterrestrial" cause. His work has sometimes been described as "demonological", but unlike the old demonologists he left no room for the "good guys": the same all-encompassing entities were not merely behind UFOs, poltergeists, and spiritual materialisations, but even angels, miracles, and the foundation of the world's religions, including Christianity.



It is very useful, therefore, to have a simple theory that covers the lot. This of course the psychosocial hypothesis provides

The alternative title "paranormalist" is more appropriate.

The "paranormalist" viewpoint has failed to obtain any wide acceptance, probably due to its pessimistic outlook. Keel viewed the ultraterrestrials as deceptive, and inimical to the human race, yet thought there was little or nothing we could do about them. One could not even take solace in religion, since that is just a part of the deception. It was inevitable that most people would ignore his findings, or, if they noticed them at all, wish to slot his observations into a more positive framework.

There are various ways the latter can be done. Some take the "New Age" view that these entities are quite benign really. Others have adapted them into a Christian framework, putting UFOs and other spirit manifestations down to the work of demons, from whom Christ and the good angels can save us. The materialist outlook is equally comforting, since it assures us that none of these bogeymen really exist.

These various UFO schools of thought are, therefore, linked to religious belief. Accordingly, attempting to convince subscribers to one such theory of the truth of another is effectively asking them to change their faith, and hence about as likely of success as trying to convert a Northern Ireland Protestant to the Catholic Church, or a Muslim fundamentalist to Judaism.

Theories and theorists

The complexities of modern life have affected the sceptic as much as anyone else. The eighteenth century rationalist had merely to disbelieve in miracles, astrology and witchcraft. Today, one might be called upon to deny the reality of near-death experiences, telepathy, clairvoyance, UFO sightings, the Loch Ness monster, pyramid power, alien big cats, the Bermuda triangle, spontaneous human combustion, conspiracy theories, Satanic child abuse, Nostradamus, remote viewing, ancient astronauts, bigfoot, the face on Mars, Spiritualism, chupacabras, channelling, the New Age generally, and of course miracles, astrology, and witchcraft.

It is very useful, therefore, to have a simple theory that covers the lot. This of course the psychosocial hypothesis provides: "human imagination". Unfortu-

nately, there are other simple viewpoints that are also able to encompass the whole field. Christians say miracles are sent by God, and all the rest is the work of demons. The school of Paul Devereux and Albert Budden explains paranormal phenomena as being the result of electromagnetic pollution. Then again, "UFO technology", supplemented by "screen memories", has been used to account for everything from Biblical miracles to Satanic abuse reports.

Thus we have at least five schools of thought: the ETH (whether "New Age" or not), the PSH, the paranormalist, the EM, and the Christian. Yet to a great extent the adherents of all these schools cite the same evidence. We observe that sky ships from Magonia resemble UFOs from Zeta Reticuli. So, medieval peasants misinterpreted aliens as fairies; or, they both come from the same place, human imagination; or, they have the same paranormal cause; or, the same electromagnetic cause; or, the same demons are responsible. What is not argued is why we should believe one explanation rather than another.

It is theoretically possible that the truth might be a combination of two or more of these views, for instance, most UFO sightings could be caused by electromagnetic pollution, but a minority could be of actual craft piloted by agents of Satan. Certainly, if one can show that the PSH explains most UFO events, this does not eliminate the possibility that some might be actual ET encounters.

Incidentally, the plethora of views does help to confuse witnesses. On 13 January 2001 a woman told me how ten days earlier she had seen a silent triangular object flying over Earl's Court, West London, faster than an aeroplane. I told her flying triangles are the ufological fashion, and that pleased her, because, she complained, no one believed her. Her downstairs neighbour had said, "You've been taking too many vitamin pills". The dustman told her, "I don't believe in such rubbish", no doubt believing only in the kind that comes in bins. Another neighbour, a drug dealer, asked, "Have you been taking what I'm taking?" On the other hand, a Christian friend suggested that it was a sign from God of the End Times; whereas members of her

local Evangelical church denounced it as "Satanic", hence typical of Earl's Court. An old woman said, "It's quite possible nowadays, it's the Russians tampering with the sky", and a Scotsman told her how he saw an object like an "old threepenny piece" flying through the sky fifty years ago.

There is no need here to point out the defects of pro-ETH writing. It is worth drawing attention, however, to some of the weaknesses commonly found in sceptical works. I have often read pieces on crop circles which boiled down to the argument: "Some crop circles are known fakes; that shows they are all hoaxes." Considered purely as an exercise in logic, this is on a par with saying: "Some men have red hair; therefore all men have red hair." Though it is termed rationalism, at root it is an appeal to incredulity, and will only convince those who share the incredulity from the start.

In framing arguments it is therefore worth asking whom, if anyone, you hope to convince. For example, if you are disputing with militiamen who believe that President Kennedy was assassinated by aliens from the Trilateral Commission acting on the orders of Satan, then you would be unlikely to impress them by reasoning based around "plausibility".

Another problem for sceptics is that often their various arguments cancel each other out. It has been stated that the "Oz Effect", in which everything is reported to go strangely silent prior to a UFO encounter, was first described in a 1967 SF novel, *The Terror Above Us*. (3) I take the implication to be that, since it initially featured in a work of admitted fiction, its subsequent repetition in "real" cases must be a result of conscious or unconscious plagiarism, and nothing to do with real events. But others say the Oz Effect proves that close encounters are only hallucinations. (4) You can't have it both ways.

(Actually, I doubt if the "science fiction said it first" view is correct in this instance, since a while ago I came across a book in my local library which quoted a 1950s book referring to the Oz Effect, though not by that name. I tried to find it again to quote it here, but it was not on the shelf. Possibly some other reader had taken it out, but John Rimmer

suggests it was abstracted by Men in Black, who are engaged in an evil plot to remove UFO books from the shelves of public libraries in order to stifle public interest in the subject, a conspiracy to which Gordon Creighton drew attention in *Flying Saucer Review* back in the 1980s.)

They know the truth

UFO coverup theories go back to the start of ufology: John Keel recalled going to a meeting in New York in 1948 where he found "about 40 people crowded into a small room, yelling and screaming at each other about government suppression and such". (5) Less well known, but equally pertinent, are the disbelievers' counterparts, such as that the US Air Force is promoting a belief in UFOs (e.g. with Rendlesham) which it secretly knows to be untrue. Leader in the field seems to be Gregory M. Kanon, who maintains that the military invented the extraterrestrial threat to justify their huge budgets.

It is worth comparing the records of the Robertson committee, which met in 1953. They concluded that, though there was no threat from UFOs, the UnAmerican belief in UFOs could be a threat to national security, since it could be used by foreign powers to create a "morbid national psychology in which skillful hostile propaganda could induce hysterical behavior and harmful distrust of duly constituted authority". (6) So they proposed various kinds of counter propaganda, such as silly alien cartoon films which would stop the public taking the subject seriously.

This indicates that they considered that they knew the truth about UFOs - that there were no such things - but wanted to suppress interest in them. This does not fit with either of the above paranoias. Nevertheless, Jenny Randles wondered if they had created the contactee movement, since absurd tales about blond, blue-eyed Venusians "were just what Dr Robertson ordered". (7)

Another version has it that the aliens themselves are responsible for the coverup, having to some extent taken control of the world already, though this line inevitably degenerates into paradox. We would have to ask if the *Magonia* editorial team are controlled by implants, or are they themselves

aliens in (quasi) human form? I am unbeknownst to myself being programmed to write all this as a further piece of disinformation?

Behind all these conflicting views lies, I think, the same fallacy: a refusal, on everyone's part, to accept that their opponents really disagree with them. No, secretly they know the truth that there are, or are not, UFOs, but are hiding it for their own reasons. It is no accident that 1950s UFO sceptic Donald Menzel was later alleged to be one of the Majestic-12 coverers-up. (Something similar occurs in other fields: Joseph McCabe, a former Catholic priest, and anti-Catholic writer, stated that the view of the Catholic Church was that "the chief Satanic manifestation, the world in its most vicious shape, is the anti-Catholic writer; above all the apostate priest, who, of course, secretly believes in Catholicism, but is moved by some mad and mysterious rage against it". (8))

Though this attitude may be adopted only unconsciously, sometimes it is quite explicit, as for instance in Martin Gardner's article on Ray Palmer in the *Skeptical Inquirer*, which contained statements such as: "If Ray Palmer for one moment believed the crap in this crazy volume [*Oahspe*] then the man was a moron, which of course he wasn't." This produced a letter from Palmer's former associate Chester S. Geier, who protested that, at least with regard to the Shaver mystery, Palmer appeared sincere: "Privately as well as publicly he was quite serious about it. For my part I recall how the members of Ray's inner circle often asked one another 'Do you think Ray really believes that Shaver stuff?' He certainly seemed to." In Gardner's inevitable reply to the reply he refused to accept this, and openly accused Geier of the same deceit: "Geier . . . was Ray Palmer's top booster of the Shaver hoax . . . It is unthinkable that either he or Palmer saw the hoax as anything but a flimflam to boost the circulation of *Amazing Stories*." (9)

What we have here might be termed the Impotent Inquisition. The original Inquisition told people what they were to believe, with the possibility of imprisonment, torture and death for those who refused. Writers on ufology have no such power, so instead they tell people what (supposedly)

they already believe, irrespective of what they may say themselves. I am not saying that this is any way comparable to the Inquisition of the Middle Ages, but I would suggest that it is totally valueless except as an exercise in self justification.

Consider the facts

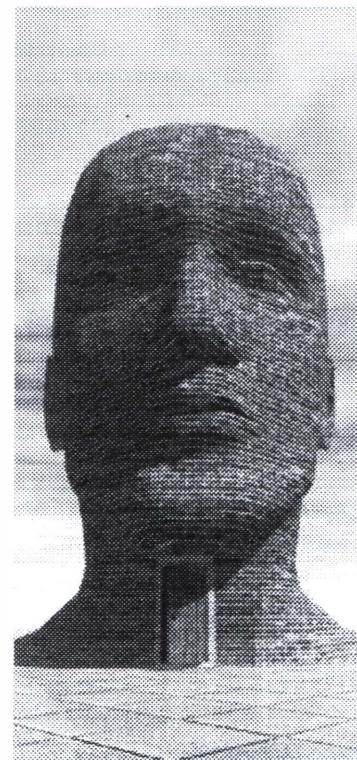
John Keel made a gesture towards the PSH when he wrote: "If you saw a strange light in the sky in 1475 you knew it had to be a witch on a broom because you had heard of others who had seen witches on brooms skirting the treetops. Now in 1975 you might decide it is attached to a spacecraft from some other planet. This conclusion is not a qualified deduction on your part. It is the result of years of propaganda and even brainwashing. If you are under thirty, you grew up on a diet of comic-books, motion pictures, and television programmes which educated you to believe in the extraterrestrial hypothesis . . ." (10)

Obviously to a great extent this is true, but it doesn't address the crucial question: What is the strange light in the sky? Is it something currently unknown to science? Even if the study of UFO reports never tells us anything about life on other planets, it may eventually lead to some new finding in natural science, or, if nothing else, teach us things about abnormal psychology. But in order to achieve this, the first requirement is to collect the evidence.

Often, alas, the full facts are not recorded, I suspect because investigators are unconsciously afraid that more data might undermine their theories. There are many examples I could cite, but here are just a few selected at random.

The Sheffield Lake, Ohio, UFO (1958) was one of the few civilian sightings to be investigated by the US Air Force. A woman claimed that at three o'clock one morning she saw an aluminium coloured disc hovering in her back yard, which emitted clouds of smoke then flew off. Two air force sergeants concluded that what she had seen was the beam of the rotating headlight of a train going past about 100 yards away, shining through smoke from a nearby foundry.

This is one of those rare cases where it would be possible to test the hypothetical explanation, by



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getting the witness to watch when another train went by late at night, and see if it resembled what she saw. This approach does not seem to have occurred to the investigators; nor to the Akron Ohio UFO Research Committee, who later attacked the official report in a pamphlet.

One of the criticisms made in the latter was that the sergeants did not make a house-to-house check among the neighbours to obtain confirmatory evidence. Since the sighting had happened in a small town at three a.m., quite likely there would have been no other witnesses anyway. But Donald Menzel defended the Air Force in this wise: "Such a time-consuming procedure would not have been justified. The neighbors had had two weeks in which to report a visiting spaceship. No such report had been made." (11)

No one investigating a murder would wait for witnesses to come forward, and, if they did not, conclude that there were no witnesses, or even no murder. In practical terms a UFO sighting is far less important than a murder case, but for precisely that reason witnesses would be far less likely to make a report of their own accord. Moreover, if other witnesses had recognised that the "object" was only a train headlight, thus confirming the Air Force explanation, then they would have seen no reason to report it. (Again, apparently, the Akron UFO Research Committee did not bother to make such enquiries themselves.) Indeed, I can see no reason to think that most UFO witnesses try to report to the authorities, or to anyone at all. As John Keel put it, the American public has not been telling the Air Force the truth about the UFOs. Even if they tried, they would probably get only a brush off. The Metropolitan police commissioner was complaining a while back about people who telephone emergency services over trivial matters. This is certainly a problem (e.g. a man who merely wished to know the time, a woman who reported a broken fingernail) but the one example the commissioner gave was of people who want to report UFO sightings.

Tony Dodd, in *Alien Investigator*, quotes the memories of Jim Duesler, which, he says, at last prove that Captain Mantell did indeed encounter an alien craft. Duesler was in the control tower

at Godman Field on the fateful day. He described the object as "the shape of an inverted ice-cream cone . . . It was rotating; at least there seemed to be a black stripe from top to bottom which seemed to move across our vision and go around and come back. We didn't time the length of rotation but it was a matter of a few minutes." In addition to one or two meaningless statements ("it was about 185-195 degrees above the horizon") we are told that the plane crashed in one piece, rather than wreckage being scattered over a mile, as is more usually the case, and that Mantell's body was "oddly intact". (12) But this hardly proves anything, and otherwise his description is consistent with the object having been a balloon.

Reading this, I wondered if a Skyhook balloon would be picked up by radar (I think not, but am uncertain about this), and whether the object chased by Mantell was seen by the radar. To my amazement, though this is one of the most discussed cases in ufology, no writer I can discover ever recorded whether the UFO was picked up on radar, still less how that would bear on the balloon theory. My guess is that there was nothing on radar, so that nobody thought about or mentioned the matter, but there is no way of knowing for sure.

A recent book, *MILABS: Military Mind Control and Alien Abduction*, (13) which is not quite so paranoid as you would expect from the title, draws attention to an interesting statistical anomaly: many books by abductees, for instance Debbie Jordan and Kathy Mitchell's *Abducted!*, Leah Haley's *Lost Was the Key*, Whitley Strieber's *Breakthrough*, Beth Collins's and Anna Jamerson's *Connections*, and Katherine Wilson's *The Alien Jigsaw*, describe how they were apparently watched by unmarked black helicopters. Yet Thomas E. Bullard's study of 270 alien abductions mentions in only four cases that the abductees saw dark unmarked helicopters over or near their houses.

Probably this discrepancy occurred because abductionists (the source of Bullard's data) are not interested in black helicopters and do not normally record them, whereas they seem important to the abductees themselves, and so are reported by those who get to

write their own books. Notably, there is no mention of helicopters in Budd Hopkins's *Intruders*, which is about the experiences of Debbie Jordan (there called "Kathie Davis"), but Debbie Jordan herself says they were, at one time, "almost daily around out houses". In the same way, C.D.B. Bryan's book about the 1992 MIT abduction conference gave more than 150 pages to the stories of Carol Dedham and Alice Bartlett, firstly long interviews, then transcripts of their subsequent hypnosis by Budd Hopkins. Speaking for themselves, they told Bryan how "black helicopters began appearing over Alice's horse farm", (14) but nothing was said about these craft in the Hopkins sessions. (Nor did Hopkins deal with their other exotic adventures, such as Carol's nighttime encounter, on a lonely road in Maryland, with a naked man wearing a four-foot stetson - was he really an alien, or just eccentric?) This suggests that a widespread phenomenon is going unnoticed because it does not fit what researchers want to hear. Moreover, whatever the real explanation for black helicopter sightings, it cannot be due to abductees saying whatever abductionists prompt them to say, the usual blanket explanation offered for abduction experiences. Accordingly sceptics, no less than abductionists, are inclined to pass over this topic, leaving it to be dealt with only by the paranoid.

Though there has been some attempt at proper analyses of the abduction phenomenon, studies tend to speak of an "abductee" as a generic creature, with no attempt to distinguish any different types. For instance, one might want to know how many are "waking encounters", i.e. the witnesses claimed always to have remembered them, and how many "recover" their memories of abduction? And what percentage of these are recovered under hypnosis, what percentage spontaneously as "flashbacks"?

(Edith Fiore's *Encounters*, though not very critical, does at least explain why her abductees came to think that they were abductees: out of thirteen cases, two had had an experience of seeing a bright light and then "missing time"; four had had dreams about aliens; one experienced a sense of fear on reading *Communication*; in four cases Fiore herself had

a "hunch" about a client, and during hypnosis suddenly asked about UFO experiences; one, visiting her for his drink problem, was told by her about UFO healings, and started recalling them; and one remembered, without hypnosis, having fifteen years earlier floated out of his flat, through the venetian blinds, into a circular building where he conversed with aliens.)

One problem is that it is difficult to know what facts may be important. Anthony R. Brown, commenting on Hufford's study of the "Old Hag Phenomenon" notes that "he discovered that the hallucinations, the paralysis, the fight for breath, and the terror that characterised the Old Hag Phenomenon fitted perfectly the major components of the Narcoleptic syndrome. At no stage did he consider that the descriptions of the Old Hag sitting on the victim's chest had any relevance to the clinical picture at all". (15)

Obviously, if you are trying to understand how television works, then knowing the storyline of *East Enders* will not help you. But that does not mean that the content of the programmes is devoid of all interest. In the same way, some aspects of an experience might have medical significance, and others social relevance.

The survey of abductees carried out in the USA by Randle, Estes and Cone found that a high proportion were gay or bisexual - far higher than would be expected by chance. This has given rise to some controversy, but no one apparently has suggested why this should be. There must be a reason, but because it does not easily fit into the usual theories I suspect the fact will end up being ignored.

David Sivier has recently argued that abduction experiences are basically sexual fantasies, and published accounts of them stand in the place of pornography. One point that tends to support this is the way that abduction stories frequently feature alien rectal probes. Now, while we cannot expect to understand alien technology, it is hard to see why, if they are engaged in fertility research and genetic manipulation as maintained by Hopkins and Jacobs, they should want to investigate our anuses. On the other hand, many people have anal erotic tendencies that they will not admit to. What better way to indulge them than in rape fantasy

which has been given a seemingly scientific and factual basis?

Sivier also says, however: "For most abductees I would suggest, much could be done by simply reassuring them that their sexual or emotional problems do not stem from abuse by aliens." (16) I cannot agree with him: on the contrary, it seems to me, people *want* to believe that their problems are due to suppressed memories of alien abduction, mass rape by gangs of paedophiles, or Satanists forcing them to eat their own babies. If they could be convinced that this was not so, then they might have to face up to the realisation that their emotional and sexual problems were their own fault, which is at best a depressing truth.

I have a particularly sad memory in this connection. On one occasion a man admitted to me that he had not (as he had been claiming for the previous year) been homosexually raped. He had merely had a psychotic episode and imagined it. That was the last time I saw him. A couple of weeks later he committed suicide.

In view of incidents like this I think that having fantasies, even quite unpleasant fantasies, can have therapeutic value. Yet most therapists do not encourage them, so people who have unconsciously prescribed themselves fantasies have to pretend that they are real events.

Whilst there are obvious dangers in taking false memories literally, personally I can foresee potential hazards in a general acceptance of False Memory Syndrome. The next step may be, some doctor will find a "cure". Then, we will find this treatment being tried out on people who, say, claim to remember Tony Blair's election pledges.

What the existence of False Memory does not do, in any case, is prove anything about UFO reports, rather, it is another of those matters which makes it harder to reach any conclusion at all. A little while ago Hilary Evans wrote of the Cergy-Pontoise case: "Many years later, Jean-Pierre Prevost, the most prominent of the three young men involved, confessed that it had been - as most researchers had always suspected a hoax; but what is intriguing is that his two companions, Salomon N'Daye and the abductee Fontaine himself, have refused to go along with their

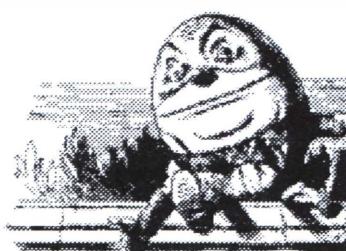
companion's confession, insisting vigorously on the truth of the affair. Easy to say they are lying, but why should they? What if they have come, by who can say what mysterious process, to sincerely believe everything really did take place just as they told police, press and researchers at the time? Believing so profoundly, that the pseudo-story is now implanted in their minds as reality?" (17) Well, maybe, but if there is no evidence besides the memories of humans, and these do not agree, no firm conclusion is possible. One could just as well argue that Fontaine really was abducted by aliens, but that because most researchers suspected a hoax, eventually Prevost managed to convince himself that it was so.

Abductionists seem to consider themselves a combination of investigator and therapist. Budd Hopkins employs a "buddy system" or mutual support network for abductees, but makes it a rule that: "The abductee whose case has already been investigated is not permitted to give any information as to the content of his or her abduction experience - descriptions of the UFO, its occupants, technical procedures, sequence of events, etc." (18) He wants to help people who have suffered at the hands and rectal probes of the heartless greys, but therapy must not interfere with his programme of uncovering the secrets of alien technology.

In fact, of course, investigators and therapists usually have incompatible agendas, as is well known in child abuse cases. Moreover, attempting, say, to learn from an abductee what date the greys plan to take over the world is futile or worse from either point of view. I had thought of suggesting that it would be more helpful to approach alleged abductions from a purely therapeutic position, and simply ignoring the question of their "reality"; but there is no point in making recommendations when no one is going to take any notice of them, so I may as well leave it at that.

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IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS TONIGHT

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED IN THE SITGREAVES NATIONAL FOREST, ARIZONA? **JOHN HARNEY** IS ON THE CASE

Some UFO stories have been exposed as hoaxes, and others can easily be explained as hoaxes. It is often difficult, though, to persuade most ufologists that a particular story is a hoax, because, as they want to believe the story, they fail to notice or deliberately ignore false assertions or logical contradictions in the story as it is presented to them. Sceptics, on the other hand, too often seem to take the view that the details don't really matter, and that if the alleged witnesses had obvious motives for hoaxing then that must be the explanation. An excellent example of a UFO event where investigators failed to get to the heart of the matter because they were too busy pursuing their own agendas was the alleged abduction of Travis Walton in the Sitgreaves National Forest, Arizona, on 5 November 1975.

THIS INCIDENT posed a problem for the sceptics because, at the time of his disappearance there were six other men with him. The foregoing sentence is an example of carelessness in describing the facts of a case.

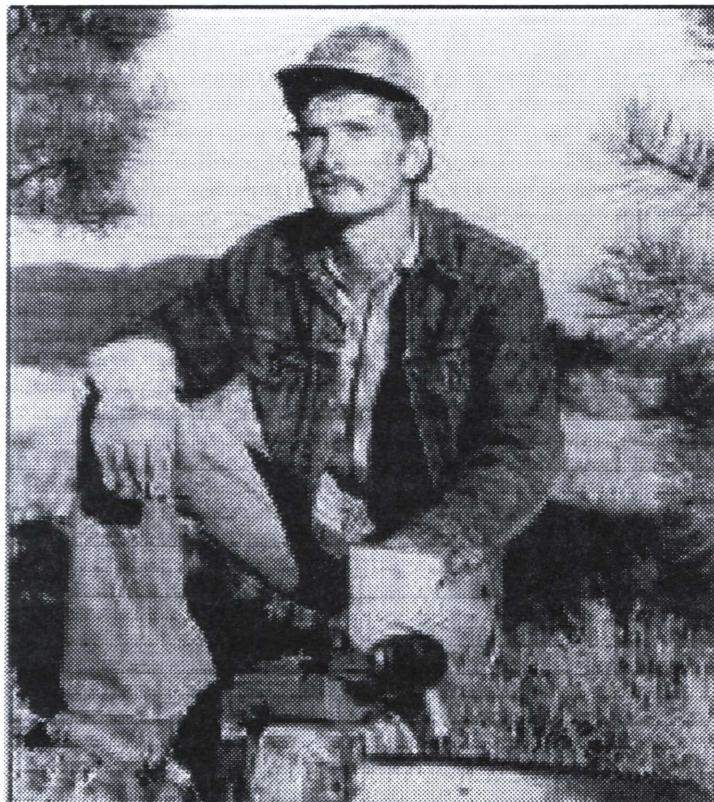
However, I would bet that most readers who have heard of this case - and who hasn't - would not have quibbled about it. Actually, no one claims to have seen Walton being abducted and Walton himself says that he was unconscious when it happened. Most sceptics believe this story to be a hoax because the men had motives, such as being "saucer buffs" who wanted to draw attention to themselves, or hoping to share a prize offered by the National Enquirer for the best flying saucer story of the year. Philip Klass devised a complicated set of arguments to the effect that Rogers hoped to benefit from an "act of God" clause in his logging contract, by causing his work to be disrupted allegedly by forces outside his control.

But surely the best way to determine whether a certain incident is a hoax or not is to try to find out what actually happened on the day in question. Most of us have seen detective films or read stories where the police investigating a murder find a man who has a set of very strong motives for committing the crime. They keep an eye on him and find evidence of suspicious words and actions. So they arrest him and he immediately produces a cast-iron alibi, and they have to start all over again. In other words, motives are not enough. We need to know what actually happened.

At this point I should make it clear that although I regard this affair as a hoax, I do so only on the basis that it seems the most rational working hypothesis. Other explanations have been suggested, apart from abduction by aliens, but they seem to me to be unpromising for anyone seeking the truth of the matter.

It is very easy to dismiss the whole business as a hoax and move on to some other case, or simply accept Walton's story as genuine, and most ufologists have





done either one or the other. However, if we consider the case a probable hoax, then we need to realise that it is by no means a simple hoax, so we should try to reconstruct an account of what happened in such a way that it makes sense. The intriguing thing about the Walton case is that this is surprisingly difficult. Examination of other cases has shown how photos or videos were faked, how other witnesses were invented by the person who told the story, or that there was never any good reason to take the story seriously in the first place.

To start with, no one who supports the hoax theory seems to have any clear idea as to who was supposed to be hoaxing whom. Philip Klass appears to have assumed that Rogers and Walton devised the story and persuaded the other five men in their gang of woodcutters to go along with it.

This raises obvious difficulties. The men must presumably have been intelligent enough to realise that when they reported to the police that Walton had disappeared, they would be subjected to close questioning, not only by the police but by journalists and ufologists. It is difficult to imagine how such an unlikely concocted story could stand up to such pressure. Their first test came when they drove into Heber and phoned the police. When Deputy

Sheriff Chuck Ellison met them there and was later joined by Sheriff Martin Gillespie and Undersheriff Ken Coplan. The men were said to be in a highly emotional state. At least, so far as I know, no one has denied this, although for most readers the source of this information is none other than Travis Walton himself. (1) And he was obviously not there to witness the emotional scenes. It has been argued that they were in an emotional state because they were afraid that their story would not stand up under questioning and that they would get into trouble for wasting police time, but as we have noted they already knew what to expect anyway and were presumably prepared for the close questioning which they knew to be inevitable. This means, of course, that if they were all in on the hoax they were displaying considerable acting talent. Their performance would surely have involved much rehearsing as well as histrionic ability.

It has been said that the police suspected that the men's emotional state was real and that it was because one of them had murdered Walton (with a chainsaw, presumably) and they had hastily cobbled together the flying saucer story in order to impede the investigation. However, if the police officers involved had this suspicion, then why did they not im-

pound the men's clothing, truck and chainsaws and have them subjected to forensic testing for bloodstains? When Sheriff Gillespie was tipped off at 2.30 a.m. on the morning of 11 November, that someone - possibly Walton - had called Walton's brother-in-law Grant Neff from a phone booth in Heber, he sent a couple of deputies there to collect fingerprints. If he couldn't be bothered to look for forensic evidence of Walton's possible murder, why should he be so concerned about the circumstances of his reappearance?

Incidentally, the details of this case have confused the brains of some of ufology's finest. Concerning the fingerprints, Jerome Clark wrote: "There were no prints at all on the phone in the third booth . . . The other two had prints, but so far as Ellison and Romo could determine in the cold and dark, none was Walton's." (2) Of course the deputies would have transferred the prints to sticky tape and they would later be examined by fingerprint experts.

After I had raised the question about the apparently brilliant acting by the six woodcutters (3) Karl Pflock wrote to me giving examples of highly impressive performances by people who pretended that they were victims of vandalism and hate campaigns, usually with the motive of defrauding insurance companies. He commented: "Believable behaviour by crime victims and UFO witnesses is one of the weakest elements of supporting evidence. While its absence is a warning flag, its presence should never be given any great weight . . . That said, however, I agree it's highly unlikely all six of Walton's fellow woodsmen could have been in on a hoax and yet appeared so convincing, not to mention keeping their stories straight under the close scrutiny they received. If - IF - the Walton incident was a hoax, at least most of them were among the hoaxed." (4)

If all of the men were in on the hoax then we do not need an explanation for the mysterious object in the forest, because it never existed. The whole story, up to the meeting with the police officers is untrue. Perhaps the men were not in the forest at all on that day. There were no independent witnesses because there was nothing to witness. It is all fairly simple.

All hoaxes have their weak points. At some stage they are likely to fail because they demand too much from the hoaxers

apart from the problem of having too many persons involved and having none of them denying the encounter with the UFO over a period of more than a quarter of a century, despite considerable pressure being put on some of them to do so.

The main alternative to the hypothesis that all were involved is that Walton and Rogers devised and executed the hoax, almost certainly assisted by a person or persons unknown. We can guess at the identities of such persons, but that would merely be adding speculation to speculation.

If Rogers and Walton devised the hoax, then they must have rigged up something in the forest which they could use to fool the other men into believing that it was a flying saucer. One advantage of this interpretation of the story is that, when the men were being interviewed by the police officers, it was only Mike Rogers who was putting on an act and the others were telling the truth, and their emotions were perfectly genuine.

All hoaxes have their weak points. At some stage in the proceedings they are likely to fail, because demand too much of the hoaxers, or they demand too much credulity from the hoaxed. In our first interpretation the weak point is where the men first meet the police officers and are closely questioned. In fact, it is so difficult for many ufologists to imagine them passing this severe test that they have abandoned the hoax theory and desperately cast about for other explanations.

However, if we suppose that Walton and Rogers managed to deceive the other five men then there is no problem here. The weak point comes at an earlier stage, when a strange light is seen as the men are driving out of the forest. Assuming that something has been rigged up in the trees and suitably illuminated, then the difficult bit is in Rogers and Walton managing to fool the other five men into thinking it is a flying saucer. Also, Rogers has to ensure that the other men stay in the truck and that he does not hang around long enough for any of them to make out what the object really is.

The object is seen ahead of the truck and to the right and it just so happens that Walton is sitting on the front seat on the right. The object also has to produce a bright

beam or flash of light at the right moment, so that Walton can be "zapped" and fall over backwards, apparently unconscious. This is supposed to cause the men to panic and they obligingly do so. Rogers then drives off so that they don't get a chance to see what happens next.

At the point where Walton is allegedly hit by the beam from the UFO there is a rather puzzling detail in the story. Although everything happens so quickly and the lighting conditions are far from ideal, they all apparently notice that Walton lands heavily on his right shoulder. Much was made of this detail by sceptics who noted that the doctors who examined Walton six days after the incident found no bruising on his right shoulder or any other part of his body. They thought that this fact tended to discredit the story, but a medical dictionary which I consulted advises: "If a bruise does not fade after about one week . . . a doctor should be consulted." (5) The doctors found a red spot in the crease of Walton's right elbow, which seemed suggestive of a needle puncture. This led the sceptics to suggest that he had been injecting himself with drugs, and that that this would account of his story of being captured by aliens. But presumably he would not do this as a one-off, and if he were in the habit of injecting himself with drugs this would surely be obvious to any doctors who examined him. Even if he had injected himself with LSD or whatever, surely this would not cause the other men to have hallucinations of a flying saucer in the forest.

Also, if Walton and Rogers were going to have any chance of pulling off their hoax they would have to remain clear-headed throughout the proceedings. Not only did Rogers have to get the other men away from the scene as quickly as possible without arousing their suspicion, but Walton had to get the apparatus used to create the illusion of a flying saucer disassembled and out of the forest before they returned to search for him. He would presumably have had a vehicle and at least one helper standing by a short distance away.

On the day of the incident there were deer hunters in the forest, so there was always the danger that some of them would

see the "saucer" being rigged up. However, it seems there were no independent witnesses to anything that happened in that part of the forest on that day. Except, that is, for the mysterious independent witnesses who phoned Travis Walton shortly before the release of the film *Fire in the Sky* and told him that he had been in the forest that day with his wife and had seen the UFO and the beam of light. Walton informed Paramount who made the film and they investigated. The man was subjected to a polygraph test and, it is alleged, he had been put up to this by Philip Klass in an effort to discredit the story. How the production of an independent witness could damage the credibility of the story is not clear to me, just as it is not clear how producing the witness and having him exposed as a liar could have any influence on the credibility of the story.

One of the strangest aspects of the affair is the obsession, by sceptics and believers alike, with polygraph tests on the witnesses and members of Walton's family. The rule in this case was apparently that if the polygraph examiner did not produce the desired results he was no good. Thus the competence of these polygraph experts depended not on their experience and reputations but on whether their results satisfied the believers or the sceptics. Of course many people refuse to take polygraph testing seriously and accounts of the use of the technique in the Walton affair make it obvious why they do not take it seriously.

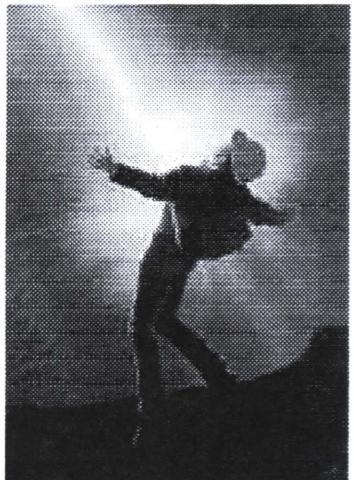
When we look at the published accounts of the case there is one curious omission. Most commentators have read the detailed reconstruction of the event given by Walton himself as to what everyone said and did. One would have thought that any experienced investigators would have quickly obtained separate accounts of the story from each witness, either in writing or on tape, and then have published them. However, I found no reference to any publication of detailed stories by the witnesses. How curious.

So which is it to be? Did Walton and Rogers rig something up in the forest which fooled the others into believing that Walton had been abducted? If so, it was so cleverly done, that although the men might have later come to

suspect that they had been duped, they could not prove anything. Or did nothing unusual happen in the forest that day, except that Rogers and his gang spent their time rehearsing a brilliant performance that was to fool many people for many years? Or is there some other explanation?

Indeed, can we make any sense of it at all? Travis Walton apparently cannot. He has written:

"However, what occurred inside the craft and the events surrounding my capture and return are not in the least self-explanatory. In fact, in the absence of conjecture or further data, these events do not seem to make much sense." (6)



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IMOGEN

PETER ROGERSON INVESTIGATES A TALE OF NINETEENTH CENTURY SLEAZE AND DECONSTRUCTS A CLASSIC VICTORIAN GHOST STORY

The classic Victorian ghost story, the ghost story to end all ghost stories began in April 1882 when a retired army captain of Irish extraction, Frederick William Despard (53), his 46 year old second wife Harriet Ann (nee Nixon), 'a great invalid', and his teenage children, 19 year old Rosina Clara, Edith Sophia was about to turn 18, 15 year old Henry, 13 year old Lilian, 12 year old Mabel, and their little brother Wilfrid, 9, moved house. They moved from Lansdown Road in Cheltenham, the town where they had been living for the previous half dozen or so years to another rented house at Pittville Circus Road, on the corner of All Saints Road, a 'typical modern residence, square and commonplace in appearance'.

THEY WOULD HAVE been accompanied by the usual bevy of servants that such an upper middle-class bourgeois family would have had in 1881: a cook, a parlour maid, a house maid and a nursery maid for the little boy. Staying with them from time to time was Rosina's married half-sister Freda Kinloch, the daughter of Frederick and his first wife Rosina nee Meredith.

Even before we begin we have a hint of something odd, what kind of man names the eldest daughter of his second wife after his deceased first wife. A bit insensitive, one might think, and suggesting that perhaps the dead Rosina held primary place in Frederick's affections. Like the then Princess Alexandra, Harriet was not only an invalid but deaf, and seems to have spent much of the time in her room.

In any case in the June after the family moved in something rather odd happened to Rosina Clara. She was in her room getting ready for bed when someone started fiddling with the door.

Thinking it was her mother she opened the door, and saw down the passage 'the figure of a tall lady dressed in black standing at the head of the stairs ... the face hidden in a handkerchief'. As the figure descended the stairs Rosina started to follow but her candle blew out and she returned to bed. It's not at all clear if she ever asked anyone who the lady might have been. Perhaps the question was redundant, for Rosina began seeing the figure with increasing frequency. She also reported that Freda, Willy and a housemaid also saw the figure.

It seems to have been in 1884 that the events began to get really strange, Freda Kinloch lost her little baby and came to stay with them, and during this time strange noises were heard in the house, and Rosina began to keep a regular diary of the now frequent apparitions, which she sent to a friend Catherine Campbell in letters. Alas however these letters and journal could never be presented to the SPR, because they contained 'matters of a private nature'. Some speculation has been devoted to the nature of these pri-



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vate matters. Peter Underwood suggested that they may contain Rosina's suspicions that the 'weeping lady' was in fact Frederick's mistress. I seem to remember that Eric Dingwall suggested that they may have included evidence of a lesbian affair between Rosina and Catherine. Cynics might point out that telling a story in the form of letters and diary entries was a Victorian literary convention.

In her account Rosina, who was, or would be, a medical student (exactly when her medical studies, which concluded successfully in 1897 began is unclear) and in her account she clearly goes all-out to portray herself as Miss Intrepid Scientific Ghost Hunter, methodically following the ghost around, putting wires across its path to try and trip it up, trying to talk to it, etc. By now Rosina is starting to see the ghost everywhere.

In the most extraordinary episode, Rosina claimed that she was sitting on the couch by the window, reading by the summer evening twilight, with mother and father in the room, when Miss Ghost came in and stood by her couch for half an hour. Rosina said nothing and her parents did not seem to see it. When it left she followed and again tried to talk to it. I think that disposes of Underwood's mistress theory, for a mistress to stand in room with her paramour, his wife and daughter for half an hour, and the couple to pretend to have seen nothing is a bit too odd for even the oddest Victorians.

By the late summer of 1884 the Despard girls are seeing the ghost everywhere, its becoming a topic of excitement. I suspect these girls needed quite a bit of excitement; life for lively intelligent young women among the Victorian bourgeois could be dull at the best of times, and an invalid deaf mother probably didn't help much. Add to that the mourning half-sister and you have a potent brew. The ghost and its hunting become the chief source of entertainment.

**ROSINA AND IMOGEN
HAD BOTH DESERTED THE
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But now there was to be a new excitement, once the girls had told their father, the ghost hunt took a new phase, the hunt for a suspect. Given the circumstances, one obvious suspect might have been Rosina Meredith looking after her daughter, or, given that Rosina thought the figure was wearing 'old fashioned widows weeds', there was the only widow who had actually lived in the house, old Mrs Littlewood whose husband died just a month after moving into the house. No; gossip was suggesting a much sexier target.

For only a few years before the respectable bourgeois inhabitants of Pittville Circus Road had the neighbours from hell, living right there in the Despard's home. These were Henry Swinhoe and his second wife Imogen Hutchings, who were brawling noisy drunks. Who was to blame was a case of you pays your money and takes your choice. Partisans of Imogen said that Henry has taken to the bottle when his first wife died, and Imogen had tried to reform him, but had taken to the booze herself. Oh, no said Henry's partisans it was the other way round, that poor innocent Henry discovered Imogen was a lush on their honeymoon, and she infected him. More plausible than these tales of innocence wronged would be to assume they were both drunks when they met. Just the sort of people to end up in strange beds, in strange houses wearing someone else's night clothes and no memory of how they got there. Perhaps that's how Imogen ended up in Henry's bed, and well, in those days that meant marriage.

The neighbourhood was soon scandalised by rows and fights, and thrown crockery. The rows were over money and Henry's kids, who you just get the hint were rather wild, and most certainly didn't take to Imogen, nor she to them. There was also Henry's perhaps paranoid belief that Imogen was after his first wife's jewels. If there were passionate fights that were talked about, you

also get the hint, at least in the early days, of the passionate sex which wasn't.

By the time Henry and Imogen had separated and boozed themselves to death, they must have been the most hated people ever to have lived in their neighbourhood. Even with a brood of teenage girls the Despards must have seemed like quite relief.

I think we can be sure that the Despards knew something of this story before they moved in, because it must have been the talk of the town. Right from the start it had probably been at the back of their minds.

Lets look at this scandal a little more closely, to see why it may have had such a fascination with the Despard girls. For the Victorians drink was the principle indication of loss of civility and respectability. 'Taking the pledge' was, for many working class families, their announcement of a move up into the respectable classes. For the middle classes a drunken husband was bad enough; a cad and a bounder, but just about tolerable. But a drunken woman was out of bounds completely. The wife was supposed to be the force of order, stability and domestic tranquillity. The home was the haven of peace. In a very real sense the Swinhoe's home was a disorderly house, an intrusion of chaotic, raw wildness into the safe respectable leafy suburbs of Victorian Cheltenham. Imogen was the anti-wife, and anti-mother, the negation of all that the Victorian housewife should be. Even Henry and Imogen's name 'Swinhoe' seemed redolent of swinishness, corruption and sensuality.

The Victorian bourgeois imagination was held in thrall by this fall out of respectability, into a proletarian mire of drunkenness, vice, poverty and squalor which they called 'The Abyss'. Imogen is the image of this 'Abyss' at the heart of the respectable.

We can sense how the image of Imogen might have had an appalled fascination for bored, re-



spectable teenage girls, how they might have whispered and giggled in mock horror about what had gone on in this very house. For a Victorian woman to become a doctor took a lot of willpower and independence, and Rosina's later career suggests someone formidable to a degree, someone who might have identified at some secret level with the wild, sassy Imogen. Yet at other levels they were opposites. Rosina never married. That doesn't in any way imply that she was lesbian, though she might have been, but that like some many Victorian women who wanted to make a mark in the world, she had to forswear the chains of marriage and domesticity. Rosina had before her examples of the dangers of sexuality. The stepmother after whom she was named (and seems to have a some hold on her imagination, when she chose a pseudonym she chose a name beginning with M, perhaps just Rose M-, with the filling to 'Morton', the SPR editor bowing to complaints about the endless dashes) had died young, one assumes in childbirth. Her own mother was now an invalid, perhaps having the little boy in later life was one pregnancy too many, unless her deafness and infirmity, like Queen Alexandra's are evidence of a more sinister cause. Now her half-sister's baby had died.

Rosina and Imogen had both deserted the role of ideal Victorian wife and mother, but in opposite directions as it were. Imogen into sensuality and excess; Rosina into austere intellectualism. In some sense Imogen is what Jung would have called Rosina's shadow. At times Rosina felt that she was 'losing power' to the figure. At one level this might be an indication of sense of weakness coinciding with the hallucination, perhaps a hint of some form of epileptic event. At another it represents surely her sense weakening of before the lure of the sensual. (Remember how the figure announces itself by a fiddling

with the bedroom door?) Yet she persists, her ghost hunt is strange form of exorcism, a battle of wills between reason and the senses. In her imagination Rosina tames Imogen, domesticates the roaring abyss... She envisions her not as a wild rampaging poltergeist, but as, well, a quiet, timid, weepy and altogether tame Victorian ghost, seen but barely heard. As the image of Imogen is tamed, as Imogen never does speak to her, the strange noises and general weirdness fade away. The wildness is being tamed and respectability is restored.

Rosina adds a couple of other details. Imogen's face, like an executioner's, is always well hidden, behind a handkerchief, with the suggestion that she is concealing some visible mark of Cain or of the sensual beast, some outward sign of inward corruption, that proclaims her as an inhabitant of the abyss.

Rosina is also much taken with the idea, deriving from Henry Swinhoe's paranoia, that Imogen is 'after his first wife's jewels', and that this is why she is haunting the house. These jewels again have layers of interpretation. Certainly, we can see them not as important in themselves, but as symbols of affection. Imogen wants them as a sign that she counts as much as her predecessor. Remember how Rosina was named not after her own mother, but Frederick's first wife. Could Harriet Ann have similar feelings?

At another level, we should note that in the English folk tradition jewels had often been used as a symbol of virginity and chastity. In lust after her predecessors 'jewels' Imogen is seeking her respectability, purity (or at least the image of purity seen through the eyes of her children and friends).

What really happened in that house we may never know. A combination of the sort of odd atmospheric effects which seem to common in 'haunted houses' which give rise to sounds that the brain interprets as footsteps and swishing dresses, which rattle doors and produce cold winds, and hallucinations on Rosina's part are a start. She was the eldest sister in residence and perhaps was able to dominate others. The need for control, symbolised in the ghost hunt and the taming of Imogen may have had darker sides. Per-

haps she was a hoaxter, and got her younger siblings involved in a game which became increasingly real, a fantasy into which they escaped from sadness and boredom. The 'other witnesses' quoted were her siblings, a couple of servants, and the rather impressionable Miss Campbell who made the curious comment 'Miss [Despard] wishes me to state that although I have never seen the figure, I have heard the footsteps...' As for Miss Campbell claim that one night she had a telepathic vision of Rosina confronting the ghost, the less said the better.

In later years just about any halfway spooky experience within a mile or so of the house had been blamed on poor Imogen. She has not however been reported in any of the local bars or night-clubs.

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Further background on the family was taken from the LDS CD-Rom of the 1881 Census for Great Britain, and the from the Familysearch website (revealing for example that Freda, Rosina and Edith were born in Tasmania). I have assumed that Harriet Ann was Rosina's mother, because Familysearch only gives the baptism of Edith, with Harriet as her mother, however the several-years gap between Freda and Rosina gives much more room for a death and second marriage, than the one year gap between Rosina and Edith.



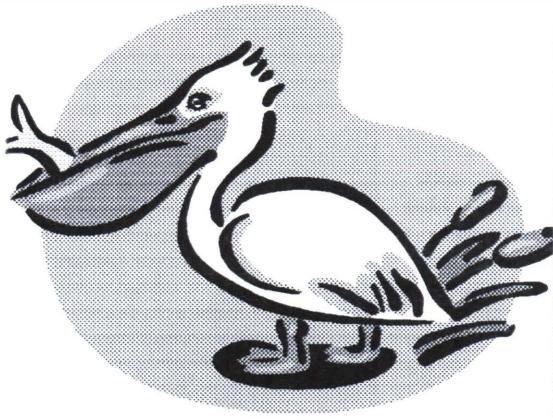
MEET MAGONIA



MEET MAGONIA ON THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH, AT THE RAILWAY PUB, PUTNEY, LONDON SW15. COME ALONG TO THE MAGONIA READERS' GROUP MEETINGS, FOR CONVERSATION DEBATE AND GOSSIP. WE'RE THERE FROM ABOUT 7.30 PM UNTIL CLOSING TIME

CONVENIENTLY SITUATED JUST ACROSS THE ROAD FROM PUTNEY STATION (10-15 MINUTES FROM WATERLOO) AT THE CORNER OF PUTNEY HIGH STREET AND UPPER RICHMOND ROAD. IT'S A WETHERSPOON'S PUB, SO NO LOUD MUSIC, REASONABLY PRICED DRINKS AND FOOD ALWAYS AVAILABLE

THE PELICAN WRITES...



AS THE PELICAN PREPARED to express his deep concern for American ufology, and in particular for the mental health of its practitioners, a communication from Hilary Evans - who needs no introduction to our well-read readers - arrived at the luxuriously appointed Magonia editorial offices. This expressed remarkably similar sentiments. Great minds think alike! Who said the Pelican was a birdbrain?

In particular, Hilary noted that American ufologists took each other's books seriously, even if they were as crazy as Jacobs's *The Threat* or Hopkins's *Witnessed*, instead of expressing concern about the mental states of their authors. (1) He concluded: "Are these people writing fun books for entertainment only? Or seriously, to work something out of their system? Or simply to make a quick buck? Sometimes I find myself hoping that it's the last of these alternatives."

The Pelican, however, considers it unwise to dwell too much on possible motives: it is best to let the facts speak for themselves. If a UFO book is nonsense, this is because of what is in it; it does not depend on the motivations of the author. Even Budd Hopkins's worst enemies apparently believe that he is sincere and industrious in pursuit of his aims and ideas, but this doesn't alter the fact that the stuff he publishes is pernicious nonsense.

To many US ufologists it doesn't seem to matter very much that the UFO myth does not have any consistent internal logic, as the

Pelican has previously noted. (2) Many of them admire the work of the abductionists as much as they believe the Roswell maniacs who assert that the US government has UFOs and alien bodies concealed at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. If aliens can float through walls, could someone tell the Pelican how they can be held - dead or alive - in captivity?

Possibly the most absurd notion is that we don't have the facts about the saucers because they are kept secret by the US government. Now there is a certain, possibly deliberate, confusion here. The US government has conducted classified projects involving the investigation of UFO reports, as no doubt have other nations. However, although such projects can usually be kept secret for as long as considered necessary, this does not apply to the UFOs themselves.

The US Air Force could possibly keep a crashed UFO secret, at least for a while, if it crashed on or near a US Air Force Base. Isn't it odd, then, that almost all "genuine" UFO crashes conveniently occur at such locations? Even in the case of the Varginha UFO incident in Brazil a few years ago, the story was quickly developed by the ufological spin doctors to include details of the captured aliens being taken away in a US Air Force plane. Even so, this case has faded from the consciousness of American ufologists, possibly because of language difficulties, as few Brazilians can speak American, just as many Americans have difficulty understanding the English spoken in Britain, unless they speak like the suave English villains in Hollywood films or Captain Jean-Luc Picard of Star Trek. (Incidentally, and no doubt quite irrelevantly, is it true that when some British films are to be shown in the USA the distributors insist on having them dubbed or subtitled, or is it just another urban legend?)

Anyway, if UFO incidents occur outside the US then it is desirable for them to have an American connection. Two of these incidents are "classics", Lakenheath and Rendlesham, and anyone who thinks that the stories about them are grossly distorted and exaggerated is likely to be condemned as a noisy negativist, pelicanist, armchair debunking sceptic. The recent news that Jenny Randles, David Clarke, Andy Roberts and

Paul Fuller are preparing a detailed review of the sacred Lakenheath case has roused many of the American ET believers to near-hysteria, and Andy Roberts has been suspended from the UFO Updates mailing list for not according them the proper deference and reverence. After all, if even the Condon team couldn't explain the radar and visual sightings and even went so far as to suggest that a "genuine UFO" might have been involved, who are these Brits to tell them anything different?

One of the daftest ideas in American ufology is the campaign begun by Keyhoe and NICAP, to persuade the US government to reveal "The Truth" about the UFOs, presumably by having an official announcement made and all relevant data declassified. Rarely is any thought given to how the rest of the world would react to such an announcement, in the unlikely event of it ever being made. The Pelican, though, has no difficulty in imagining the howls of derision, accompanied by expressions of dismay by America's allies.

Meanwhile, in the UK, we have our ETHers and other nutters. There are the entertainers, who write silly books and give sillier lectures, illustrated with fuzzy video clips. There are the mentally unbalanced and the purveyors of numerous cranky theories, each of which purports to explain nearly all UFO reports. Then there are a few who take a practical, pragmatic view of UFO stories and simply try to establish the facts of each case, wherever this is possible. They know who they can trust, and who they should avoid in helping with their investigations, or they quickly find out.

However, it occurs to the Pelican that many people new to ufology might not be aware of the minority of ufologists who take a sane, pragmatic approach to the subject and who have no time for pseudoscientific nonsense, absurd hypotheses and paranoid conspiracy theories. If we were to publish a list of such people it would not take up much space, so perhaps we could give it a try. Any nominations?

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READERS' LETTERS



Dear Mr Rimmer

Just when I thought it was safe to carry out my promise and to bid bye-bye to Magonia with issue number 72, I find that it has surprised me at the eleventh hour with Anthony R. Brown's outstanding article, 'the Decline and Fall of the Psychosocial Empire'. He demolishes the whole case for the psychosocial explanation of alien abduction, thereby completely undermining the foundation upon which Magonia is built. It's a pity that the other contributors have paid no mind to his arguments because they all strut their usual predetermined stuff which we have come to know and tolerate.

With the book reviews, for instance, I can always tell if the book in question is a 'Magonia' or otherwise by the opening sentence of the review. Chris A. Rutowski's *Abductions and Aliens: what's really going on* merits the words 'Canada's premier ufologist has written a well balanced and useful study of the abduction claims based on his own experiences and researches', whilst poor old Leo Sprinkle's *Soul Samples: personal explorations in reincarnation and UFO experiences* gets 'Have you ever met anyone, say in a pub or at a party, who proceeds to simultaneously bore and embarrass you, by telling you more about their life history than you could ever want to know?' I rest my case!

Anthony also treats us to a beautifully clear exposition of the case against the 'personal incredulity' factor which the Pelican cannot have read, for surely he would not have written 'The Brooklyn Bridge abduction story is so complicated and so manifestly absurd that even some of Hopkins' collection of "abductees" declared it to be obviously a hoax or fantasy game'. The Pelican's reaction is what one would expect from a virgin ufologist who dismissed a case just because it is absurd, for we all know that the whole ufological world is absurd; in truth, absurdity is one of the prerequisites of ufology. In addition, it doesn't follow that just because the Pelican cannot get his head around a certain situation that it cannot therefore be true.

Anthony is then naturally disposed to ask why sceptics bother

to refute the claims of abductees at all. Why not let them wallow in their delusions? I have often pondered upon this same great mystery and once or twice asked Magonia why it has battled for thirty years with what it considers to be a will o' the wisp. I have, as yet, received no reply to this nor to other difficult questions I have posed, but that's only to be expected.

Having previously dismissed the ETH as untenable because of the flexibility and richness of its explanatory power, Anthony now has very ably demonstrated that this same flaw has brought the psychosocial theory crashing down about Magonia's ears. So what is the answer? Anthony has demolished just about everything both sides hold dear and has not offered any kind of alternative explanation. Does this mean then that he concludes that alien abduction of humans does not take place at all, either physically or within the mind, in fact *it just does not occur at all!* He says as much in his reference to the Old Hag: "...sitting on the sleeper is an impossible story, so the appearance of a real alien abducting humans is an impossible story". Then again he talks of "...a physical impossibility: namely the abduction of humans by aliens".

We ufologists now find that Anthony has put us in an impossible situation. We are sure that the alien abduction scenario exists in one form or another but he has proved that neither of the major explanations is tenable, and what's more he seems to hold the solution to this impossible question. He tells us enigmatically "...the text of the original abduction narrative happens to contain hidden facts that reveal how the whole story came into being. But the interpreters are so busy interpreting that they fail to spot the meaningful information that the text contains..." Please Anthony, put us out of our misery and tell us what you have discovered that we mere mortals have missed.

Readers of Magonia may know from my previous letters that I hold that aliens do exist, do abduct humans physically and put them through medical procedures, but that they are not extraterrestrial but are another race of beings

who belong in, on, or around the Earth. They have been here since humanity's inception and have manipulated us for their own ends. They have hoodwinked us with their procession of religions, fairy folk and space brothers with the sole purpose of preventing us from discovering their hidden agenda, which is to continue 'farming' us without our knowledge, consent or refusal and subsequent rebellion. The current phase of abduction, medical examination and race hybridisation may be but the latest in the long line of smoke-screens designed to keep us looking in the wrong direction, or it may be the culmination of centuries of interference. As such my hypothesis differs from the ETH which Anthony has demolished, but is the difference enough to save it from his demolition gang? Please Anthony, once again I beg you to let us in on your secret.

In order that I may be able to see this letter in print, and hopefully Anthony's great revelation in subsequent issues I shall have to renew my subscription to Magonia. You may remember that I wrote a year ago to tell you in no uncertain terms that I would not be renewing same because I could no longer stand Magonia's inflexible attitude. But you have reverted to a cunning plan of producing an infinitely thought-provoking article at the last moment solely to entice me into changing my mind. I am very flattered to be considered of such importance and herewith enclose a cheque for £5 for my subscription [We couldn't bear to loose you. JR].

Just in case I have got it wrong and Anthony's article was nothing to do with my departure, may I hope it presages a new era in the land of Magonia, whose grim, resolute face will finally soften towards all things unusual and paranormal and whose inflexible attitude and predetermined disbelief will be put on hold at least for a while in order to road-test a new, open-minded approach to our mutual perennial mysteries.

Yours sincerely,
Margaret Buckingham
Bournemouth, Dorset.

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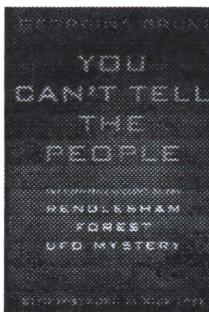
BOOK REVIEWS



Georgina Bruni. *You Can't Tell the People: the cover up of Britain's Roswell.* Sigwick and Jackson, 2000. £17.99.

Just you when you thought that Rendlesham was at last dead and buried, here comes yet another book on the subject. However this promises to be different, for as Nick Pope tells us in the introduction, Ms Bruni is not your average Joe Nerd ufologist, listening to dull lectures in the Neasden Methodist Church Hall, or proping up the bar of the Pissed Newt. No, she is 'trained as a private detective, she has been a freelance investigative writer who specialises in the activities of cults...also...a successful businesswoman who organises social functions, promotes celebrity clients and runs an Internet Magazine'. She is well connected and mixes freely with politicians, diplomats and other key movers and shakers'. She employs as her sidekick 'the world's top female bodyguard and covert operator'. Clearly she has just the right CV to be defence correspondent of *Hello* magazine.

So we have the promise of a UFO book with a difference, so what to we get. Eh, well just another piece of credulous bunk ufology, complete with tales of alien spaceships, mysterious secret weapons, tight lipped officials, security men who silence witnesses with dialogue like 'bullets are cheap', and the inevitable references to channelled information from 'The Nine', and the claims of those cranks standbys Wilhelm Reich and Nicola Tesla. If people don't tell Ms Bruni what she wants to hear then they have a)



been frightened into silence, b) are part of the cover up, or c) had their memories erased by hypnosis and repalced by

screen memories. If documents don't tell her what she wants to read then they must have been doctored or be forgeries. The book itself is written in the usual confusing style so you can never exactly work out who is who, and who said what to who, when. So this book could have been written by Joe Nerd ufologist after all.

The one message coming from this book is that of 'its not the lighthouse, it couldn't be the lighthouse, you mustn't think it was that bloody lighthouse'. So someone is very determined that the lighthouse story doesn't come out, and that wild flying saucer stories continue to circulate.

Just think for a moment, if you were the USAF or the British or American governments and you were pushed into an absolute corner, which story would cause you the most embarrassment in the tabloids? 'Drug crazed American servicemen fired on a lighthouse thinking it was an ALIEN SPACESHIP (shock horror), and these are the men guarding the *cruise missiles* (even more shock horror) or 'Brave lightly armed US servicemen confront an *alien spaceship*, risking all to do their sacred duty and protect their precious charge'.

ment agents. Oh damn, that always happens doesn't it.

Well believe that story, and you will certainly believe the tale of the Russian Roswell, and the story told by the guy who just happen to drop into a top secret NASA facility where there were technicians from all over the world, and perhaps beyond, studying photos of the aliens on the moon. Actually, for the first few pages I thought that the authors of this book might have had a critical faculty, but then one wonders. I suspect they don't really buy much of the stuff in this book, but what the hell, it sells in the sticks..

No exactly a contest is it folks. True or not the first headline invites in all sorts of real investigative journalists, sniffing out tales of sex, drugs and rock n roll, and a state of affairs too close to Bilko for comfort. The second invites cranks and makes sure that real journalists stay far away. However you must be careful not to make the UFO story too credible, that might mean serious scientists sniffing around. So if you spread UFO stories, make sure they are not that credible, and keep a good deal of crank stuff in to keep scientists and open minded journalists at bay. And if the lighthouse story does come out, its all in the context of an incestuous ufologist/debunker debate that no-one else listens to.

Would it matter that much now the cold war is over. Well no one wants to look foolish and its clearly in the interest of those concerned to look their best, especially to a nice attractive lady ufologist. And even now who knows what big bad secrets might come out if there was too much sniffing about. Perhaps long before 1980, these bases held, at least in part, the biggest, baddest secret of them all. What such a secret might be is anyone's guess, but as a purely fictional, hypothetical example take the following. Have you noticed how many of the real big secrets such as the crashing nuclear bomber and the Lakehurst UFO case come from 1956. Ms Bruni reports another vague story of something nuclear being launched from the Orford Ness area in the August of 1956. There are three stories, unusual activity, nuclear, and crash all from the Summer of 1956, the height of the Suez crisis. Suppose they were all reflections, refractions and covers of the real big bad one, the one secret which could never ever be revealed: that some time during the Suez crisis the ill and unbalanced Anthony Eden ordered one or more bombers armed with atomic weapons to nuke Nasser. Someone tipped off the Americans, and when appeals to reason failed, on Eisenhower's personal orders it or they were shot down by American fighters from Lakenheath, Woodbridge or Bentwaters. Just think of the consequences of something like that getting out, and the levels of secrecy and suppression that would be used to make sure it never did.

William J Birnes and Harold Burt. *Unsolved UFO Mysteries: the world's most compelling cases of alien encounter.* Warner Aspect, 2000. £5.99, pbk. Have you ever wondered what the final boggle threshold of the credulous souls in MUFON might be? Well, according to this book, it is the story of the guy who claimed to have a dead alien stored in his freezer. That's the one he beat to death after it vaporised his dog. Sadly if MUFON change their mind and do decide to investigate, its too late, because after the alien came back to life again it was snatched away by the govern-



Kevin Randle.
The Roswell Encyclopedia.
Quill, 2000.
£14.99, pbk.
Kevin Randle and Russ Estes. *Spaceships of the Visitors: an illustrated guide to alien space-craft.* Fireside Books, 2000.
£9.99 pbk.

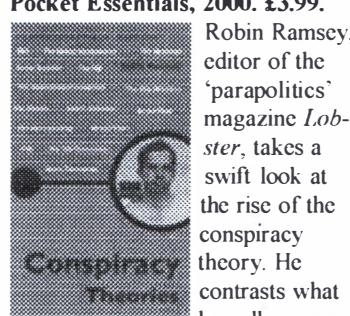
Kevin Randle is something of a puzzle. At times he gives clear evidence of having that rare commodity in ufology, a critical faculty, yet continues to champion the Roswell myth, based largely on 30-50 year old 'eyewitness testimony'. He does this despite that fact that 'prime witnesses' keep going down the plug hole, the latest being Glenn Dennis. There is always someone else to jump on the bandwagon, with some personal tale, or tale told by a friend, or a friend of a friend. Cynics might suggest that many of the 'witnesses' of Roswell are old people who are glad of the company and respectful attention of the researchers, and tell them what to hear. The less cynical might argue that people living around a top secret military facility have had a

number of odd experiences over the years, which in retrospect have got attached to the 1947 story. The conspiracy minded might suggest that, as with Rendlesham, there are those who are only too happy to keep the flying saucer stories running to divert attention from the real (terrestrial) secrets of Roswell.

Randle shows the same mixture in *Spaceships of the Visitors* which to a large extent centred around some very dodgy UFO photographs. Most of these look like small models tossed into the air. In some cases, as in the Trent's, 'photographic analysis' is said to show that they were large objects. We Magonians would be rather more impressed by this if we did not recall all the strange unearthly things that 'experts' said about Dave Simpson's infamous Warminster hoax, or that the current chief protagonist of the authenticity of the Trent photograph, has also authenticated the absurd hoaxes of Ed Walters. The usual arguments get trotted out about these type of photographs, often along the lines that 'these simple country people couldn't have made such an elaborate hoax'. Patronising nonsense.

Robin Ramsey. *The Pocket Essential Conspiracy Theories.*

Pocket Essentials, 2000. £3.99.



Robin Ramsey, editor of the 'parapolitics' magazine *Lobster*, takes a swift look at the rise of the conspiracy theory. He contrasts what he calls mega-

conspiracy theories, those which claim that all of history is controlled by, and all the heartbreak, pain and suffering in the world is caused by 'them', the terrible others who are incarnations of cosmic evil; with the limited conspiracies of small groups who act in limited fashions. These latter, he is much more disposed to believe in, and he spends some time attacking the media and academic establishments for rubbishing conspiracy theories.

Some of the usual suspects such as the Bilderberg group and the Trilateral Commission get a look in. Whether these groups are 'conspiracies' I suppose depends on what you mean by conspiracy. That they act to ensure the leading politicians are 'on side' and support policies which favour international capital seems obvious, but that they do any detailed actual 'conspiring' much less so. I have my doubts whether the Bilderburgers have much real influence these days. Their vaguely centre-left planned welfare capitalism seems very 1970's. Arguably life in Britain in the 1980's might have been less traumatic if they had have been in charge, as opposed to the cowboy capitalism of Reagan and Thatcher.

Ramsay points out that the United States is especially liable to conspiracy theories, because it is essentially an ideological state. The ideology of 'Americanism' is seen by most people to be perfect, so when life is anything but, this cannot be seen as the fault of the ideology but must be due to the machinations of evil individuals. Conspiracy theories have, in the *X-Files* years, developed a close relationship with the paranormal, but this goes much further back than the publication of *Dawn of Magic*. It was there in the crazy theories of Tiffany Thayer right at the start of Forteanism, and it goes without saying that they were there



Louis Mayerling. *We Faked the Ghosts of Borley Rectory.*
Pen Press Publishers, 2000. £10.00, pbk.

The author claims have been involved with Borley rectory and its human inhabitants since he was a small child, and to have been involved in hoaxing some of the activity there. He also provides prosaic explanations for many other events there, and some background on the decidedly strange Lionel and Mary Anne Foyster. Died in the wool debunkers will lap this up, but more select sceptics will feel that 'confessions' like these should be treated with a fair degree of caution, and want evidence to back up the claims. What we find is that Mayerling, aka George Carter, aka Lee Lennox, does not appear in the indexes of any of the books devoted to Borley, though other

obscure characters do. The rest of his life story presented here, in so far as it makes much consistent sense reads a little too much the life and times of Desmond O'Connor to be accepted without confirmatory evidence.

Jan Bondeson. *The London Monster: a sanguinary tale.*
Free Association Books, 2000.
12.95, pbk.

An account of the unsavoury career of the 'mad bottom stabber of olde London' who brought terror to the streets of the metropolis in 1789-90. There is a short but interesting account of examples of mass hysterias, mass delusions and moral panics, including a brief reference to newly discovered mad-gasser episodes. Bondeson argues that the London monster was however real enough, though we cannot be sure that the man found guilty and imprisoned for the offences was actually guilty of some of them. In any case there were probably copycats at work.

from the beginning of ufology. But surely it is older still, for the 'conspirators' are but partially secularised witches and demons. Even today conspiracy theories ascribe quasi-supernatural powers to the 'terrible others'. The latest incarnation of this is the ascription to various demonic others of 'mind control', the same powers of enchantment that the devil once gave to witches. Conspiracy theories also view the world in a Gnostic light: it is a false face, an illusion, and history a marionette show manipulated by the 'powers and principalities' of cosmic evil.

Though Ramsey argues for the above dichotomy between 'mega' and 'real' conspiracies, in practice the line becomes extremely blurred. For example, Ramsey champions conspiracy theories about the assassination of President Kennedy, and says that perhaps only a couple of dozen people were involved. Later on, he favourably comments on theories arguing that the Zarapuder film has been manipulated. Other writers argue that the autopsy has been faked. More and more people are getting involved, more and more of the documents of history are claimed to be false.

Lobster itself demonstrates the blurring of the boundaries: during much of its life it was devoted to 'rational' conspiracy theories, involving intelligence agencies and shadowy private groups, often targeting the Left. Since the end of the Cold War, it has increasing been drawn down the paranormal road, endorsing characters such as 'Armen Victorian', and tales of mind control. In this little book Ramsey says kind things about Uri Geller and crop circles, and hints of intelligence activities in alien abduction stories. (There might be a bit of truth in the later. Intelligence agencies have probably played little or no role in the modern abduction epidemic, but there is some evidence that they were involved in the Betty and Barney Hill story. Given that the Hills were a mixed-race couple active in the civil rights and labour movement, they were almost certainly under FBI surveillance. The strange characters who first suggest missing time to Betty look like intelligence agents. Pushing her over the edge to discredit her seems like the sort of thing that Hoover's FBI might have done)

• David Clarke. *Supernatural Peak District*. Robert Hale, 2000. £15.99.

• Katy Jordan. *The Haunted Landscape: folklore ghosts and legends of Wiltshire*. Ex Libris Press, 2000. £9.95.

Recent Internet discussions about the role of experience and tradition in the dissemination of supernatural narratives, makes these two studies of folklore at the opposite ends of England, timely. Folklorist, historian, journalist and ufologist David Clarke explores the line between folklore and modern day paranormal studies. The book is essentially a compilation of contemporary supernatural memorates set in the context of the local folklore.

Described by Daniel Defoe in 1725 as a 'waste and howling wilderness', and John Aikin in 1795 as 'a region of black barren heights and long extended moors.. being destitute of most of the romantic beauties of other mountainous country', the Peak district is today a national park and a place where the urban trippers can go for a weekend break. It represents the wild abandoned wilderness on the edge of the inhabited world, and its variegated folklore reflects this. What emerges from this book is a folklore which, both in traditional narrative and memorised personal experience, lies beyond conventional categories, and in which the very ancient lies alongside the very modern.

The memorates and folklore collected here included haunted houses, road ghosts, alien big cats, phantom dogs, phantom buildings, phantom aircraft, cursed heads and taboo propeller blades, flying triangles and ghost lights flickering inside cars. Some of the stories here, such as the Stocksbridge bypass ghosts, and the Howden Moor incident will be familiar to *Magonia* readers, others less so. What emerges from Clarke's account is that these various experiences really cannot be categorised into little boxes marked psychical research, ufology or cryptozoology. In a sense they are almost the residue left, which psychical researchers, cryptozoologists and ufologists don't want because they do little to prove the existence of life after death, the presence of paws-and-pelts animals, or nuts-and-bolts spaceships. They are a protean whole, merging into each other, and into experiences so

bizarre that no one could characterise them. The story of the 'giant slug' crossing the road is one such.

Though the continuing popularity of ghost stories, and UFO tales was expected, what is less so is the survival, or is it resurrection, of ideas of taboo and curses, the belief that taking into one's possession, or wrongly using, a wide variety of objects, including Celtic (or pseudo-Celtic) heads, a West African fetish, or the propeller from a crashed aircraft can bring supernatural vengeance down on one in the form of 'runs of bad luck'. Clearly some very archaic beliefs live on beneath the thin veneer of modernity. Faced with this sort of material the old dispute between personal experience and cultural source as origins of the stories is moot, the two are not diametric opposites, rather they fit totally together, experience and tradition constantly impact, reinforce and modify each other. Traditions tell us how to interpret ambiguous stimuli, and the experiences thus generate weight and alter the tradition.

As fashions change the same experience generates new explanations: a woman in an allegedly haunted cottage has episodes of sleep paralysis and detects strange smells in the house, this is evidence for ghosts; a woman in Israel, noted in the Barry Chamish book also reviewed in this issue, reports the same thing, that is evidence for alien abduction. We can never be certain as to where tradition ends and 'real' experience begins. Folklorist Clarence Daniel relates how a Methodist minister told him he was saved from being attacked by 'two unsavoury characters' by the sudden appearance of a black dog, which when the minister patted it, his hand went through and it disappeared. This is in fact a folk story at least two hundred years old, which one might call 'the travellers supernatural guardian'. Sometimes the

guardian is another human figure, sometimes a dog. On a recent TV programme about angels, the tale was set with a human guardian and in Eastern Europe. The protagonist is usually a minister or other religious figure and there are generally two 'unsavoury characters'. In some versions one of the characters confesses years later on his death bed, that they would have attacked the minister if it were not for the presence of the companion.

Nor should we assume that the older material was any less dependent on the mass media, than modern UFO stories; we will never know how many 'ancient tales' told by granny, were ones

that her granny had read in the book given as a school prize in her youth. Can we be sure that the practitioners of 'old Celtic traditions' didn't learn the tradition from someone who had read about them in a copy of *The Golden Bough* borrowed from the library in the 1920's?

Katy Jordan's study of Wiltshire folk-

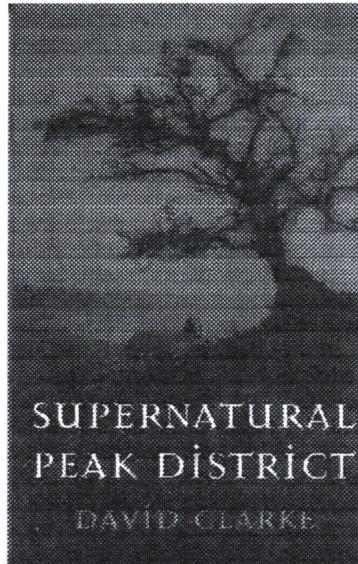
lore is in some ways more scholarly and traditional, both in the approach, with extensive notes and a greater concentration on the actual process, and style of narration. It is also more traditional in the choice of subject matter, with only a brief section on big cats to accommodate the twentieth century. So we have the legends of saints of battlefields and the church added on. But when we come down to the 'ghost lore' we find some interesting parallels with Clarke's material: the black dogs, the phantom Roman soldiers, the haunted houses. Jordan remains puzzled like Clarke by the production of apparently sincere first hand experiences which nevertheless have many of the features of traditional stories. She suggests that the legends grow outwards from an experiential core, acquiring traditional motifs as they do so. Does this happen as the story spreads beyond the teller, or do narrative formulae and cultural

traditions influence our memories and perhaps our perceptions themselves? Jordan seems unsure on this point.

Her attempts at 'explanations' of the experiences boil down to a list compiled by the very superstitious Ian Wilson, and are themselves essentially pieces of folk tradition, some very old, others late nineteenth or early twentieth century. These are not empirically based 'scientific theories', but varying traditions of belief and disbelief. Thus the primary traditions of belief in 'unquiet spirits needing prayer' and disbelief in 'rats in the wainscoting and the like' date from pre-Reformation and early Reformation times respectively. Beliefs about place memories are late 19th or early 20th century, based on analogies with the camera and gramophone recording, ideas about poltergeists and the sexual energies of adolescents derive from the popular Freudianism of the 1920's and 1930's.

Though there are similarities there are also differences: Jordan's ghosts are rather closer to the SPR ideal than Clarke's: quieter, more domesticated, footsteps padding around cottages at night for example. More the revenant than the protean night-boggart. Does this reflect differences in landscape, cultural tradition, media influences, age of respondents or what? Perhaps the supernatural lore of the Peak is more concerned with landscape, metaphors for the 'otherness' of wild nature, whereas that of Wiltshire is more concerned with memory, and 'off campus history'.

Michael Kurland. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Unsolved Mysteries*. Alpha Books, 2000. £12.99, pbk. This latest 'Idiot's Guide' excursion into the paranormal ranges widely from astrology, ESP, Atlantis and UFOs to the fate of the Lindbergh baby; though it does omit some famous historical mysteries such as the coffins of Barbados and the identities of Jack the Ripper and the assassin of JFK. Such coverage can't help but be superficial, though the section on UFOs is brief, but refreshingly sceptical about Roswell.



Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud. *A dictionary of English Folklore*. Oxford University Press, 2000. £20.00

This scholarly encyclopedia, with more than 1,200 entries from the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance to Yule has two aims. Firstly to rescue English (as opposed to Scots, Irish and Welsh), folklore from what they see has undeserved obscurity; and secondly to place the study of folklore on a sounder, more scholarly footing, removing the romantic, but long outmoded obsession with notions of 'prehistoric survivals' and similar wild speculations. To this end Simpson and Roud often emphasise the relative modernity of many customs and traditions.

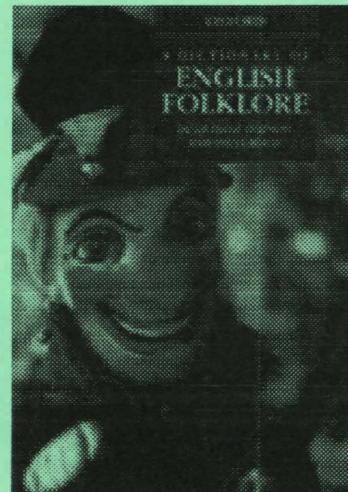
Though, inevitably, the bulk of the dictionary is devoted to traditional 'olde worlde' customs and beliefs; there are acknowledgements to more modern developments, with articles on urban legends, alien big cats, and new customs such as the leaving of flowers and other mementoes at the sites of tragedies. Surely they should have included flying saucers, animal mutilations, Satanic abuse legends and crop circles as well (the last not only being folklore but folk art as well).

The emphasis on 'quaint customs' is perhaps inevitable, reflecting not just on the period of collection but the concerns of the collectors. Folklorists, like anthropologists and many sociologists, portrayed themselves as internal travellers, 'in the company

of strangers' whose strange ways and mores they sought to convey to the reader 'back home' in their comfortable office or home. For folklorists, these 'strangers' were often the rural populace, whose were both quaint and heading to extinction. Of course, logistics also

played a role; the population that folklorists collected from tended to be those still in awe of squire and parson, who would be suitably deferential and helpful towards middle class interviewers. Trying to collect folklore in Victorian urban slums would have been a much more hazardous operation.

There are biographical entries on past luminaries of the folklore movement, the stipulation that those included should be safely dead, means the authors can sometimes say their mind without looking over their shoulders to m'learned friends. The entry on Andrew Lang echoes modern concerns, as he is not only criticised as one of the chief architects of the despised 'survivals' school, but because "he clearly believed in some psychic phenomena such as ghosts and even fairies and was also involved in the Society for Psychical Research... He called for



a 'scientific approach to the supernatural'... but his evident belief and 'open mindedness' on such topics was hardly calculated to appeal to those who were working so hard to convince the world of folklore's serious scientific credentials..."

Some may see

that comment as having resonances with Jacqueline Simpson's disputes with David Huxford, who seems to be positioning himself in the tradition of Lang's 'psycho-folkloristics'. This indicates that there are still major problems in treating anomalous personal experiences in a manner which avoids either 'supernaturalising' or 'pathologising' them. This book will almost certainly be regarded as a standard work on folklore for some considerable time; and it may be one of the last records of a dying culture. That does not mean that the emerging global multiculture will not have a vast and vibrant folklore of its own. Indeed, as Roger Sandell once speculated, it could be that the post industrial society will see a revival of traditions and beliefs that were subject to strong cultural repression in the age of mass heavy industry.

Richard Francis. *Anne the Word: the story of Ann Lee, female messiah, mother of the Shakers, the woman clothed with the sun*. Fourth Estate, 2000. £14.99.

A fascinating account of the life and strange times of Manchester's very own messiah. 'Mother' Ann Lee or Lees was born in Toad Lane, off Shudehill, to the back of the Arndale Shopping Centre. Like many future would-be shamans and mediums she had an imaginative childhood, lying in bed at night entranced by hypnagogic images of beautiful colours and heavenly scenes. Ann was set for a wider role, however, than as a village wise woman. After joining a charismatic local sect known as 'The Shakers' (so named after the propensity to

shudder and shake in religious ecstasy). She eventually took it over, leading the bulk of its members to America in the throws of revolution.

The cult she founded reflected very much her own personality, including her hatred of sex, and love of control. Francis's vivid account, derived from the Shakers' own sources, perhaps more than any dry academic account gives a sense of what is was like being inside a cult. Lee used many of the techniques used by

modern cult leaders, then separation of families, the bombarding of the vulnerable with affection, which could be turned off like a tap if they proved too awkward, the psychological pressure, the confessions. It is many ways the portrait of a mini totalitarian state, though founded on psychological and emotional rather than physical force. With its often strange activities, Francis sees it

as something altogether more 'other' and disturbing than the domesticated image of simple tunes,



Barry Chamish. *Return of the Giants*. Blue Star Productions, 2000. £10.95, pbk.

Most of this book is an account of the recent UFO scene in Israel, where the stories produced include some old fashioned CE-IIIIs. cases of the alleged ground markings, crop circles, bedroom visitants, odd marks on people's bodies etc. It would appear that cultural variation among reported ufonauts is still going strong, as Israeli UFO occupants tend to be giants, rather than the classical grays. As with many of these stories, it is impossible to know what really happened, and all one can say is that if some of the events happened exactly as reported, they would be very puzzling indeed. The nub however is that we can have very little confidence indeed about that if, as Chamish is clearly a believer. Indeed he is more than that, he is a TV journalist, who created a scandal in Israel by alleging that Yitzak Rabin had been assassinated by Israeli intelligence, and not by Chamish's friends in the radical right. His political views clearly influence this book, for he sees the giant ufonauts as the returning Gilgal Resaim, the giants of ancient Hebrew mythology, come to support the PLO, and the Oslo peace accord of which Chamish disapproves.

clothes and furniture which made the movement famous in its later days. In its dances and other ecclesiastic activities we can see something of the common origin of ritual and entertainment, as means of evoking non-ordinary realities.

Not surprisingly this brought about considerable conflict with the local community, a particularly dangerous situation in a largely lawless society, where power was often in the hands of rival self appointed militias and vigilantes, a bit like Kosovo without the UN, and it says something of Ann's resilience that she survived both after bouts of persecution, indeed outside attacks probably helped to cement a common identity against the world.

HOLD THE BACK PAGE



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As You Were

Sorry about that. The January 2001 issue of *Magonia* was number 73, as it said on page two, and not number 72 as it said on page one. Just to make sure your hapless - or hopeless - editor gets it right in future, we'll make the number a little bit more prominent in this and future issues.

Mind Your Language

Over the last year or so, we've noticed what may be a new moral panic in the making: children's toys which spout obscenities when their voice mechanism is activated. This story appeared in *Metro*, the free commuter newspaper distributed at railway stations in London, on 3rd November 2000:

"Tigger banned for 'swearing'. Thousands of talking Tigger toys for children were withdrawn from sale yesterday - because they appear to be growling 'w****r'. Disney, which makes the Winnie The Pooh character, admitted thousands of the Tiggers had already been sold to unwitting parents. The alarm was raised by a man from Gateshead, who bought the toy for his girlfriend. He squeezed the animal's foot as instructed and heard it say 'w****r'. Disney claimed the £14.99 toy was saying 'I'm Tigger' before letting out a growl but took action after the complaint. A Disney spokeswoman said: 'The phrase was recorded by a trained and accredited Disney voice artist and was designed for young children. It appears, however, that some adults are mishearing the phrase and so all stocks are being taken off the shelves.'

For American readers, w****r is *Metro*'s euphemism for 'wanker', which in this context is not the name of a road in Chicago or a brand of beer.

A more recent news item, the source and date of which is lost somewhere in the depths of *Magonia* Towers, reports problems with another Disney toy, the cowgirl character from *Toy Story II*, who is claimed to ask "where's

my clitoris?". An anxious Disney spokesperson assured concerned parents that the young lady is actually enquiring "where's my critters?". Maybe Disney's 'voice accreditation system' needs some improvement.

Little Green Men

This is therather predictable title of a novel by Christopher Buckley, son of American political commentator William Buckley. It's a funny look at the American political and media world, centred around a Jeremy Paxman-like TV interviewer who is apparently abducted by aliens and subjected to the usual anal probes and such. It's very funny, and I recommend on its own terms (published by Allison and Busby, £6.99), but it will have a special resonance for ufologists. Whilst some UFOland personalities, such as loveable old Uncle Phil and Linda Moulton Howe, appear under their own names, other characters are thinly disguised portraits. There is Colonel Roscoe J Murfletit, who served with the US Army for thirty years, investigated the Roswell crash and was present at the autopsies: "He is the author of the best-selling book, *The Things in the Crates*. No prizes for guessing who he's meant to be."

Another character is particularly interesting, a rather sinister researcher called Dr Danton Fallopian: "With his widow's peak of jet black hair, goatee, potbelly, food-stained necktie, darting, feral eyes, enormous beetly eyebrows, and intense manner, he gave the impression of someone who was on intimate terms with sanatoriums". Fallopian is described as having a PhD in nuclear physics, and having worked for the US Government "in a number of capacities." He now lives in Canada. Thank goodness he does not resemble any real ufologist, especially any particularly litigious ones who might be tempted to sue for libel if they felt such an unflattering portrait was meant to apply to them.

End of an Era

the *Daily Telegraph*'s obituary page of 20 March 2001 records the recent death of Desmond Leslie. Author of *The Flying Saucers Have Landed* (1953) Leslie's ufological career will be familiar to most *Magonia* readers. He also achieved non-ufological notoriety when he threw a punch at literary critic Bernard Levin live on TV in the '60s. (Let's hope that some other ufologists are less physical in their attacks on literary critics.)

Of great interest also are some of the other circumstances of Leslie's life which may not be so familiar. Born into a characteristically eccentric Anglo-Irish family (like Brinsley le Poer Trench, with whom he founded *Flying Saucer Review*) he was a cousin of Winston Churchill, and celebrated VE night with him at 10 Downing Street. In later years he opened a night club at the ancestral home, Castle Leslie in County Monaghan, which was frequented by the likes of Mick Jagger and Marianne Faithfull.

Leslie was perhaps the last survivor of the first generation of British - OK, British Isles - ufologists who came to the subject bringing their disdain for science, often having a background in Classics, Eastern mysticism and Theosophy. Most of Leslie's contribution to *Landed* was based on alleged Sanskrit records. Peter Rogerson has described this as the 'public school' as opposed to the 'grammar school' tendency in the development of British ufology. The latter was famously characterised by John Cleary-Baker's attack on the "white-coated godlings of the laboratory" when dismissing the science undergraduates who formed the Cambridge University UFO group in the sixties. The *Telegraph* obituary points out that Leslie was apparently delighted when Arthur C Clarke and the Astronomer Royal Bernard Lovell slated his book. Mind you, Lovell also famously denounced all talk of space travel as "bilge".